



Inside Congress

by United States Representative George R. Nethercutt, Jr.

For the week ending April 19, 2002

Welcome to this week's edition of Inside Congress. I am glad to share with you a little of my work in the national legislature. Please follow the listed links or contact my office for more information on the topics mentioned here.

SPOKANE TO RECEIVE TERRORISM PREPAREDNESS FUNDING

The City of Spokane will receive \$280,000 from Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs (OJP), so the city can purchase specialized training equipment for local hazardous materials (HAZMAT), fire services, law enforcement, and emergency medical services (EMS) personnel. The funding comes from the Domestic Preparedness Program which provides training, exercises and equipment support to enhance their capacity to respond to incidents of terrorism involving the use of weapons of mass destruction.

This funding is great news for Spokane. This will enable Spokane's local emergency personnel--the people who will be first responders in the event of an attack--to improve their response to situations involving weapons of mass destruction by training with equipment identical to that which would be used in the event of an actual attack.

MILLIONS IN ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE FOR STATE APPLE GROWERS

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency will begin taking applications for the 2000 Apple Market Loss Assistance Program (AMLAP-II) on April 29, 2002. AMLAP-II will provide about \$75 million to eligible growers for their 2000-crop apple production. The payments will help offset economic losses due to low prices in the U.S. apple market. For program information, contact county USDA/FSA Service Centers or check FSA's web site at www.fsa.usda.gov.

ON THE FLOOR

Here is a recap of the legislative activity for the week:

H.R. 4156 - Clergy Housing Allowance Clarification Act. The bill passed 408-0. I voted yes.

Since 1921, ministers and other clergy have been able to exclude from gross income a portion of their church income that is attributable to housing. Most clergy members in every denomination rely on this tax benefit. A well-established Internal Revenue Service revenue ruling has limited the amount that can be excluded to the fair market rental value of the housing. This bill will clarify in statute that the parsonage allowance is limited to the fair market rental value to prevent some from trying to eliminate the IRS rule.

H.R. 4167 - Family Farmer Bankruptcy Extension Act. The bill passed 407-3. I voted yes.

H.R. 4167 extends Chapter 12 of Title 11 of the U.S. Code to June 1, 2002. Chapter 12 offers special bankruptcy protection for family farmers by allowing them to reorganize their debt rather than forcing them to liquidate their assets. A family farmer is defined as an individual, spouse, or family owned partnership or corporation with debts of less than \$1.5 million, 80 percent of which arises from the farming operation. The debtor must derive at least 50 percent of gross annual income from farming.

H.R. 476 - Child Custody Protection Act. The bill passed 260-161. I voted yes.

H.R. 476 makes it a federal offense to knowingly transport a minor across a state line so she may obtain an abortion, in order to circumvent a state's parental consent or parental notification law. This bill does not override, or in any way alter existing state parental involvement laws, nor does the bill impose any parental notice or consent requirement on any state.

H.R. 586 – Taxpayer Relief Guarantee Act of 2002. The bill passed 229-198. I voted yes.

Many taxpayers may not know that due to a technical rule in the Senate, the tax relief package signed into law last year will expire on Dec. 31, 2010. In order to make sure American taxpayers continue to keep their hard-earned money and plan for the future, the House passed a bill this week to make last year's tax relief permanent, while stipulating that Social Security remains secure for our seniors. Here are some of the provisions that I voted to make permanent:

- New, lower individual income tax rate reductions
- Child tax credit doubled from \$500 to \$1,000.
- Increased the IRA contribution limit to \$5,000 from \$2,000.
- The elimination of the Death Tax.
- Increased contributions to Education IRAs from \$500 to \$2,000 and tax-free distributions from qualified tuition plans.
- Greater deductibility of student loan interest.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

I always enjoy hearing from you. Please feel free to contact me if I can be of assistance to you in any matter. Here are some of the ways you may reach me, especially if you know of others who may want to receive this report each week:

Spokane Office

920 W. Riverside, Suite 594
Spokane, WA 99201
509-353-2374
Fax: 509-353-2412

Walla Walla Office

29 S. Palouse Street
Walla Walla, WA 99362
509-529-9358
Fax: 509-529-9379

Spokane Valley Office

9209 E. Mission Avenue, Suite C
Spokane, WA 99206
509-924-7775
Fax: 509-924-7671

Washington, D.C. Office

223 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
202-224-2006
Fax: 202-225-3392

Colville Office

555 S. Main Street
Colville, WA 99114
509-684-3481
Fax: 509-684-3482

Website

www.house.gov/nethercutt